

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SNM-02 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 /072 W

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R 171505Z SEP 76

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3119

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 6458

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFORN PINT, IS, SY

SUBJECT: DRUZE FAMILY REUNIONS

REF: JERUSALEM 1219

1. TODAY'S MAARIV REPORTED THAT SEVERAL MEETINGS TOOK PLACE BETWEEN ISRAELI AND SYRIAN OFFICERS UNDER UN AUSPICES IN THE UN GOLAN BUFFER ZONE FOR THE PURPOSE OF ARRANGING THE PROGRAM OF DRUZE FAMILY REUNIONS ACROSS THE ISRAELI/SYRIAN TRUCE LINE, WHICH WAS INAGUGURATED ON SEPTMEBER 15. DESCRIBING THE CONTACTS BETWEEN THE MILITARY OFFICERS AS "GOOD SPIRITED" IN CONTRAST TO ISRAELI/SYRIAN MEETINGS FOLLOWING THE 1974 DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT, MAARIV ALSO STATED THAT THE OFFICERS HAD EXCHANGED INFORMATION ON THE "DEFECTION" OF A SYRIAN SOLDIER REPORTEDLY A DRUZE TO ISRAEL ON SEPTEMBER 13. REPORTEDLY THE SOLDIER IS RECOVERING IN AN ISRAELI HOSPITAL FROM WOUNDS INFLICTED BY SYRIAN BORDER GUARDS DURING HIS FLIGHT.

2. THE JERUSALEM POST REPORTED THAT IN THE FIRST DAY OF THE PROGRAM OF REUNIONS A TOTAL OF 40 DRUZE PARTICIPATED IN THE REUNIONS IN THE UN BUFFER ZONE WHILE THOUSANDS
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LOOKED ON FROM NEARBY HILLS. APPARENTLY IN KEEPING WITH

AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN ISRAEL AND SYRIA, THE PRESS WAS KEPT AT A DISCREET DISTANCE FROM THE MEETING AREA.

3. IN A CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF, MICHAEL BAVLI OF THE NORTH AMERICAN DIVISION, MFA, SAID THAT THE AGREEMENT WITH SYRIA PROVIDES FOR REUNIONS BETWEEN GOLAN DRUZE AND THEIR RELATIVES IN SYRIA, BUT DOES NOT EXTEND TO DURZE WITHIN THE GREEN LINE. EITHER SIDE CAN INITIATE A MEETING BY PROVIDING NAMES TO OFFICIALS OF THE OTHER COUNTRY. THERE IS NO SET SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS NOR LIMITATION ON THE NUMBER OF FAMILIES. BAVLI SAID THAT THE ARRANGEMENT CERTAINLY DOES NOT CONSTITUTE A "GOOD FENCE" (IN REFERENCE TO THE BRISK TRADE AND CROSSINGS ON THE LEBANESE BORDER), AND ISRAEL IS NOT EXAGGERATING ITS IMPORTANCE, BUT THE REUNION AGREEMENT WITH SYRIA IS NONETHELESS VIEWED AS SIGNIFICANT. WHEN ASKED WHAT HE THOUGHT WERE SYRIA'S MOTIVES, BAVLI REFLECTED A MOMENT AND REPLIED THAT IT WAS ESSENTIALLY A HUMANITARIAN STEP PROBABLY IN RESPONSE TO HEAVY PRESSURE ON DAMASCUS FROM THE SYRIAN DRUZE COMMUNITY.

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